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New York, NY 10011

February 13, 2006

Federal Communications Commission
Washington, DC

To Whom It May Concern:

I am writing to express my strongly held opinions in response to your **"Notice of Proposed Rulemaking" 05-311**, regarding the question of **"video franchising."**

The broadcast spectrum and the right-of-way along which its telecommunications infrastructure was built is an invaluable public resource of this country, no less than the air we breathe, the water we drink, or the highways we travel on. As such, relinquishing it wholesale to private control would be a serious, antidemocratic mistake. By the same token, even a nationally regulated public standard of control would take insufficient consideration of the multiplicity of local interests and voices which constitute the wealth of America's marketplace of ideas, guaranteed in the First Amendment's right to free speech.

The negative consequences of ending the current system of local cable franchising are numerous:

- 1) Telecommunications companies will no longer be accountable to local consumers, with regard to rate schedules, universal service (insuring less profitable communities are not redlined), and specific customer complaints.
- 2) Public, Educational and Governmental (PEG) channels will no longer be able to reflect the diversity of our communities, especially in their ability to provide representation to underserved populations such as youth, minorities, the disabled, and others whose voices all-too-often go unheard in commercial media. Nor, in many communities, will the proceedings of local government continue to be broadcast to its constituents.
- 3) A critical resource for training a new generation of media-savvy producers will be lost. Currently, more than a million people around the country—myself included—make use of the low or no-cost opportunity to receive instruction and access to expensive equipment, with which we can hone our skills and learn to express ourselves and represent our concerns to a mass audience on PEG's TV's unique electronic soapbox.

In conclusion, I would note that, in a world of increasing debate over the ramifications of free speech, the quintessentially American conclusion that the remedy for destructive speech is more speech, is borne out more colorfully and productively on public access television than on scores of other mindless commercial channels which would be spawned by the decimation of local franchising. The result will be an unconscionable increase in the vast wasteland Newton Minnow so presciently warned us against many years ago.

Sincerely,
Aaron Edison
Independent Producer
Manhattan Neighborhood Network